

Date: 01 June 2023

Title: Report Item – Neighbourhood Plan Assistance Proposal

By: K Larkin (Deputy Clerk)

Purpose: To report on a proposal for assistance from a planning consultant

Recommendations: To accept the proposal and approve in principle the estimated cost of £9,025 plus VAT

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1. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has requested support for the development of the parish Neighbourhood Plan from a planning consultant who has previously provided training to the Group.
 2. The consultant Alison Eardley has provided an outline of the proposed activities and costs which has been circulated in full to councillors.
 3. The first steps of establishing a Steering Group and designating the area of the Plan have already been accomplished, subject to the appointment of an additional non-councillor volunteer to serve on the Group.
 4. The consultant summarises the stages of development as follows:
 - **Applying to Locality for support** – this is a source of government grant funding which should cover the cost of the exercise. [*However, the council has, as a precaution, set aside a budget of £10,000*]
 - **Engagement activity** – It will be important to involve the community as much as possible in the development of the plan. You might wish to host a launch meeting to discuss the scope of the plan and to try to garner volunteers to support the work. This would also provide a useful opportunity to gather initial views on what is important to local people, which in turn can usefully feed into the development of the bespoke Design Guide. Input at this could also feed into a vision and objectives for the Plan, which can be shared back with the community for buy-in. Following the launch of the project, it is helpful to have an ongoing channel of communication to keep people informed of progress, for instance via a local newsletter or noticeboard
 - **Evidence gathering** – The main policy of the plan will relate to Design Guidance and Codes. There is a Technical Support package available to apply for from Locality for this work. This would be at no cost to the Parish Council. In readiness for the work, you would have feedback from the launch meeting. In addition, many groups undertake a ‘walkabout’ of the local area to consider local character and design and this can also feed into the work on the Design Guide. The Design Guide normally takes in the region of 4 to 6 months to produce via the Technical Support. 4 If you decided to prepare a Local Green Space policy,

this would involve identifying potential sites and assessing these against the criteria as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. It is helpful to contact site owners at an early stage in order to ensure that they are fully aware of the designation and what it would mean for them. Each space would need a description, photograph and map. Depending on any other feedback received from the community, and potentially informed by discussions with SDNPA officers, there may be other areas that you wish to include in the plan – these may not be policies, rather projects that have been identified as important or areas where any developer contributions might be prioritised locally. Once the Design Guide is well underway and any green spaces identified, it would be helpful to host one further public meeting to engage on the evidence and findings to date. This would also provide a useful opportunity to consolidate the vision and objective(s) of the Plan.

- **Drafting the Plan:** I will support you in writing the Plan document and policies. This will include mapping.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening** – Prior to going to Regulation 14, it will be necessary to have the draft Plan ‘screened’ to ascertain whether the policies (individually or collectively) are likely to have significant environmental impacts and would trigger the need for an SEA and/or HRA. The general rule of thumb is that these are normally required for Neighbourhood Plans allocating sites. Nevertheless, a screening report has to be prepared to accompany the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan. The process requires a 5-week consultation with Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency. We should be able to start this as soon as the scope of the Plan is known and we have draft policy wording in place. The 5-week period might provide a useful opportunity to gain informal feedback from the SDNPA
- **Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) consultation** – I can support as necessary the Regulation 14 consultation (minimum 6 weeks). You will need to send the Plan and supporting documents to statutory consultees and ensure that the community have an opportunity to engage.
- **Preparing Submission Draft Plan and supporting documents** – Following this first consultation, I can support the group in collating the comments received and considering each one to determine how best to address it. I will also support you in preparing the Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement which need to be issued alongside the Submission Version Plan. 5 We will amend the Plan into its Submission Version, to submit to the local authority, who will commence (and lead on) the Regulation 16 consultation (minimum 6 weeks). During this consultation, we will liaise with the SNDPA to identify an Examiner
- **Examination** – I will support you in the Examination including, where relevant, assisting the group in preparing responses to any queries from the Examiner. I can also assist in amending the Plan as required with any suggested modifications.
- **Referendum** – The referendum is organised by the local authority and you may wish to consider how to promote it locally.